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1. TTI Helps Build House, Finds a Home

When the Institute adopted Habitat for Humanity last year for its annual charitable campaign, TTI employees knew they would be helping a family in need. That certainly happened, but no one knew the profound impact their involvement would have on . . . themselves.

On June 20, Executive Associate Director Bill Stockton handed over the house keys to a “too moved to speak” Jennifer Whittine, who relocated to Bryan with her family when her Louisiana home was destroyed by Hurricane Katrina.

About 40 employees had worked on the Whittine home while it was under construction. The Institute also raised $8,800 for the Bryan/College Station Habitat for Humanity effort. (Similarly, employees in each of TTI’s urban offices helped their local Habitat for Humanity programs.) Employees also donated pantry items, which were placed inside the Whittine home prior to the ceremony, completely filling the pantry and much of the cabinet space.

Partly, Saturday’s Habitat for Humanity home dedication was designed to thank the numerous businesses and volunteers who had a role in building the new home. It was move-in day, and the Whittines would finally have a home of their own, largely built with the compassion of a community.

As Jennifer Whittine headed to the microphone, only a few phrases
could be understood through the sobs and the tears: “truly overjoyed” and “blessed to be a homeowner.” One of her daughters was able to take over, saying, “Thank you for all you have done for us. It is truly a blessing.”

The outpouring of appreciation had many in the crowd wiping away tears, too.

“Based on what we've seen today, I really think Habitat for Humanity will be a part of TTI from now on in some way or another,” Stockton said. “It’s been a blessing for us to be involved in this.”

Members of the 2009 TTI Day Charitable Subcommittee, including Melissa Tooley, Terri Parker, Michelle Wright, Kerry Fillip and Martha Raney Taylor, attended the dedication.

“In her remarks, Jennifer Whittine talked about blessings and how Habitat has changed her life,” said Tooley, co-chair of the TTI committee overseeing the project. “To be honest, those of us who participated in the dedication ceremony were blessed every bit as much just to be a part of it. I am so proud and grateful to be a part of an organization that makes such a difference within our community.”

2. HR Urges Employees to Study Annual Benefit Changes

TTI and Texas A&M University System employees will see significant changes in numerous benefits for fiscal year 2010. The upcoming changes will be discussed in meetings scheduled for later this month. (Meeting dates can be viewed in the attachment, Annual Enrollment Schedule 2009.)

“One of the biggest changes will occur with the Scott and White Health Plan,” says Linda Edge, director of TTI Human Resources. “The out-of-pocket expenses will increase significantly over last year as it begins charging a 20 percent coinsurance on various medical procedures. But, numerous other changes are planned for other carriers and benefits.”

Those changes include the following:
• Employees will use the *iBenefits* button, a new option on the [Single Sign On menu](#) for Annual Enrollment this year.
• For A&M Care plans, Medco Health Solutions, Inc., will take over the administration of the prescription drug portion from CVS/Caremark.
• For Scott and White Health plan participants, there is an increase in costs for inpatient care, outpatient services, surgery and chemical dependency to a 20 percent coinsurance.
• The life insurance provider is changing to Minnesota Life. Coverage maximums for dependents and evidence of good health requirements are changing, but all existing coverage amounts will be grandfathered.
• Attached is a health plan premiums comparison for FY 2009 and 2010. ([View the attachment, 2009-2010 Health Insurance Premium Comparison.](#))

The upcoming changes will be discussed in Annual Enrollment meetings that will be conducted on various days between July 6 and July 30. TTI employees will be able to participate in various Annual Enrollment meetings including a meeting via TTVN at Gilchrist on July 7 in room 102 from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. Other dates for meetings can be viewed in one the attachments to this email, Annual Enrollment Schedule 2009.

Details of the plans are available to employees and can be viewed by visiting [http://www.tamus.edu/benefits/ae/](http://www.tamus.edu/benefits/ae/).

Employees should make all benefit changes online using the *iBenefits* enrollment system, which can be accessed through Single Sign On at [http://sso.tamus.edu](http://sso.tamus.edu). Retirees will still receive booklets and the enrollment forms in the mail in early July. It is also important that employees and retirees check and update their email and home/mailing address in HRConnect (select the “Personal Data” option, scroll to the “Address” selection and follow the directions to edit the information). This will ensure that they receive Annual Enrollment email messages and any mailed information.

[View the attachment](#)
3. TTI Anniversaries

**5 Years**

Jodi Carson, Associate Research Engineer (DDV)
Beatrice Martinez, Senior Office Assistant (NET)

**10 Years**

Helen Olivarez, Office Associate (DTO)

**20 Years**

Lupe Fattorini, Senior Office Associate (BFP)

**25 Years**

Nadeem Chaudhary, Senior Research Engineer (DTL)

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4. TTI Cited for Employee Support

Research Technician Lee Gustavus and Agency Director Dennis Christiansen were recognized by the National Committee for the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) during a ceremony June 26.

Research Associate Chip Sosa, who is a member of the Texas Army National Guard, nominated Gustavus and TTI for the awards. “TTI and my supervisor, Lee Gustavus, have been extremely helpful and flexible every time I’ve had to fulfill my Guard duties,” Sosa said. “I feel that Lee and TTI deserve some recognition.” Sosa is scheduled to be deployed overseas, possibly to Iraq, in October.

Former TTI employee George Dresser, who is an ESGR chairperson, presented TTI with the Above and Beyond Award and Gustavus with its Patriotic Employer Award. Dresser told those gathered at the presentation that since Sept. 11, 2001, more than 723,000 members of the Guard and Reserve have been called into active duty. And many of those have been called up as many as three
“It’s an easy call for us to support the men and women of the Guard and Reserve,” Christiansen said in accepting the award on behalf of TTI. “Their sacrifices ensure our freedom here at home.”


5. TxDOT Priorities Key for TTI Research Projects

The latest Research Development Seminar, organized by Executive Associate Agency Director Katie Turnbull, examined the Texas Department of Transportation’s (TxDOT’s) Research Management Committees (RMCs). The seminar offered tips for obtaining research projects through well-written problem statements.

“Working with TxDOT staff is critical in making sure the research focuses on their priorities,” Turnbull told attendees. She provided handouts that specified the fiscal year 2011 TxDOT research priorities for each of the four RMCs.

The deadline for submitting problem statements to TTI Technical Advisory Panel members is July 27. Problem statements will be submitted to TxDOT by Aug. 3.
6. Rick’s Beat: Bambi Time at the Bligh Place

In the Brazos Valley, mid-November signals the beginning of mating season for *Odocoileus virginianus*, or white-tailed deer. And about 6 months later, like clockwork, spotted fawns begin to hit the ground. That’s when the work starts for licensed wildlife rehabilitator Donna Bligh and her TTI-employed husband, Roger.

Currently, the Blighs are caring for 19 fawns ranging from 1 to 8 weeks of age that were rescued after being injured or orphaned. They each require three bottle feedings of goat’s milk per day, not to mention clean housing and medical care.

Despite the fawns looking very similar, the Blighs — after 12 years as rehabilitators — have become experts in identifying each individual and the reason that fawn was brought to their Brazos County home. Some were found after their moms were killed by an automobile; others were injured in barbed-wire fences, by dogs or by fire ants. Each fawn has a story, but the Blighs want everyone to know that most “abandoned” fawns are not abandoned at all.

“In nature, fawns are left alone while the doe is off feeding,” Roger Bligh says. “Chances are if you find a fawn lying still on the ground, the mom is probably not far away and the fawn should be left alone. If the fawn is in obvious distress, contact the game warden or a local rehabilitator for advice and assistance.”

Every October, in a bittersweet tradition, the Blighs gather up their rehabilitated fawns and release them back into the wild. It’s a second chance for what is arguably one of the most precious creatures on earth.

*(Feel free to submit ideas for Rick’s Beat to news@ttimail.tamu.edu.)*

7. TTI in the News

There have been numerous mentions of TTI and our experts in recent media reports. Here are links to some of the stories.

Saving the Federal Highway Trust Fund (*Duluth News Tribune*)
June 28
8. Summer Blood Drive a Success

Even though summer is here and vacations are in full swing, 39 donors took the time and gave the “gift of life” June 23 during TTI’s blood drive. It was only the second summer blood drive for TTI since the Institute began them in 2003.

First-time donor Senior Facilities Coordinator Duane Wagner assures others, “it was a painless procedure, and I feel good about doing it.” Wagner says he’s been meaning to donate since recovering from a 2006 four-wheeler accident that nearly required a blood transfusion. “I will donate again.”

“I was very impressed with the turn-out,” says organizer Nancy Stratta. “We had 32 donations, which included 25 units of whole blood, 4 units of double red cells and 3 units of red cell plasma, for this drive compared to only 21 units for the summer 2007 drive.”

The Blood Center has opened a donor facility in College Station at
1701 Rock Prairie Rd. Those who want to donate between the TTI blood drives may go directly to the facility. Your donation at the facility can be credited to the TTI Group Code L899.

The next blood drive is scheduled for Oct. 29.

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9. Editor’s Corner: Yet Another Word Pair

Following my two recent editorial columns on word pairs, I received a question about one I didn’t mention: alternate and alternative. That word pair gets its own special column, since use of the two words is tricky and I frequently see problems with them in reports.

The primary rules for alternate and alternative are consistency of use within a document and use of what sounds best. Webster’s dictionary, which is the one TTI editors use as our basic editorial reference, defines each with the other as a prime definition. They are usually interchangeable, but there are a few fine distinctions.

Alternate:

- It can be used as an adjective, verb or noun.
- As an adjective, it means occurring by turns, appearing on opposite sides or every second time, or constituting an alternative.
- As a verb, it means to take turns or cause to take turns.
- As a noun, it means a substitute or alternative or someone who takes turns.
- Webster shows “alternative” as a comparable definition.

Alternative:

- It can be used as an adjective or noun but not a verb.
- As an adjective, it means offering a choice or differing from conventional.
- As a noun, it means an opportunity to choose between options, or one of those options itself.
- The adjective definition does show “alternate” as a
comparable definition, but the noun definition does not.

The primary fine distinction I see between the two is that “alternate” implies equivalency of options, but “alternative” implies differences that will let you choose one option over the other. For example:

- I recommend “alternate” when referencing equal options, such as alternate designs that could be used interchangeably. In this sense, you would conduct an “alternatives analysis” rather than an “alternates analysis” because you don’t need to analyze equivalent options. You have an “alternate juror” instead of an “alternative juror” because the fill-in juror would work just as well as the original.
- I recommend “alternative” when referencing differing choices, such as pavement structure alternatives where one needs to be selected as best practice. In this sense, you can have a “better alternative” but not a “better alternate.”

That’s just Rhonda’s Rules, however, not a definitive answer.

*Editor’s Corner is written by Rhonda Brinkmann, research editor in TTI Communications. Rhonda is happy to accept requests for column topics.*
CenterLine is a production of TTI Communications. We encourage your comments and suggestions for articles about TTI people and research efforts. Please send email to news@ttimail.tamu.edu or call Rick Davenport at (979) 862-3763.